# The Christians BLESSED CHOICE

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The godly Mans resolution to cleave fast to God and his Truth, notwithstanding Trials, Troubles, and Persecutions.

Very seasonable for these Times.

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Rom. 8. 18, *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

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By *J. H.* a Servant of Jesus Christ.

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# THE CHRISTIANS Bleſſed Choice.

Hebrews 11. 25, 26.

Chuſing rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon: eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the honours in Egypt; for he had reſpect to the recompence of the reward.

IN this Chapter, beloved, we finde the bleſſed Apoſtle opening and applying the Doctrine of Faith, having firſt aſſured them, that he and the reſt of Chriſts Diſciples

were in the number of those who did believe to the saving of their souls. Having told them in the 38. verse of the foregoing Chapter that the just shall live by faith; he comes here in this Chapter largely to declare and shew unto them what saving Faith is: and this is laid down in the five first verses of this Chapter. As, first, It is the substance of things hoped for: the evidence of things not seen; a means to obtain a good report. Through Faith we imbrace the truth of God contained in the word, as the creation of the world by the word of God. By faith, and by faith alone, our sacrifices, our services, our duties, our persons, and performances are accepted in Jesus Christ. By faith we receive whatsoever we ask of God in prayer. Matthew 21.22. And without faith (in the sixth verse you see) it is impossible to please God. And from the seventh verse to the end of the Chapter, he sets down the several fruits and effects of faith in all ages, by the most eminent examples of Gods faithful servants.

I ſhall not now trouble you with the ſeveral particular examples of faith recorded in the Chapter, but ſhall leave them to your own particular meditation as you finde them recorded in the Chapter, and conſider what is there ſaid, and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things, 2 Tim. 2. 3.

Now that which I intend briefly to inſiſt upon, is that eminent example of the faith of Moſes, in the words before mentioned, in that he choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon: eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches, than all the honors of Egypt.

Before I come to the Obſervations which flow from hence, give me leave a little to look back into the two foregoing verſes, wherein we have firſt the example of the eminent faith of Moſes parents, who contrary to the Kings command refuſed to deſtroy him; the King he commanded all the males to be ſlain, but they being ſtrong in faith, by hiding of him did

preserve him; and when they could hide him no longer, they chose rather to trust him to the mercy of God, by casting him upon the water, rather than to endanger his life by the hands of mercilesse and bloody men. And this they did as the Apostle here saith, not fearing the Kings commandment. There are several useful and profitable instructions which may be deduced from hence, I shall onely name them, and so proceed.

And the first is this, that God takes special notice of his peoples faith, he records it to all posterity.

Secondly, I observe from hence, that its a very great mercy to be born of faithful and believing parents: had not Moses parents been faithful and believing, Moses might have been destroyed as well as others were.

Thirdly, I note from hence, that God can and will preserve his people, maugre all the rage and malice of the Devil and all his instruments. The enemies of Gods people may design evil against them, but the Lord preserves them: when men are as it were

were at their wits end, and know not which way to fly for succour, then doth God know how to deliver them. Though the afflictions of Gods people are many, yet out of them all will God deliver them, Psam. 34. and the 19 verse.

Fourthly, I note from hence, that it is lawful to disobey the wicked and unlawful commands of lawful authority. If Kings command that which God (who is King of Kings) forbids, we ought rather to obey God than men: instances of this truth we have many in Scripture. Memorable is that unparallel'd example of the three Children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the third Chapter of Daniel, when Nebuchadnezzar the King commanded all to fall down and worship his golden Image, or else to be cast into the fiery furnace, they stoutly resisted, knowing that God was able to deliver them. Be it known to thee, O King, we will not serve thy gods. If they obeyed not the King, then they must expect nothing but to be cast into the burning fiery furnace:

nace; but this they feared not, they took no care to answer the King in this matter, they knew God was able to deliver them; however, they resolved whether deliverance came or not, they would rather suffer than sin. If it be so that we must be cast into the furnace, we know our God is able to deliver us: but if not, though we be not delivered, yet be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image that thou hast set up. The King he threatens a burning fiery furnace, alas, thats very dreadful, very terrible to flesh and blood, but whats the fire of men to the everlasting fire of God: mens fire that can onely consume a poor rotten carkass, but the fire of God that is unquenchable, and will destroy both body and soul. Men can onely kill the body, and after that they can do no more; but God can destroy both body and soul, and that for evermore.

Excellent was that holy saying of that holy man of God, the blessed Martyr Polycarp, St. Johns disciple, when the Emperour threatned him with

with fire if he would not forſake Chriſt: Alas, ſaith he, you threaten me with your fire, alas, what a poor inconſiderable thing is your fire! You do not, ſaith he, conſider that everlaſting fire which God threatens. So likewiſe the holy Apoſtles of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, in the 4. of the Acts, and the 18. and 19. Verſes, when the Rulers commanded them not to preach in the name of Jeſus, they anſwered and ſaid, Whether it be right in the ſight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. God commands Miniſters to preach the Goſpel, and Miniſters ought to preach the Goſpel, notwithſtanding the commands of men to the contrary.

And ſo in the 25. of the Acts Verſ. 29, when the Apoſtles were brought before the High Prieſts and Councel, and by them queſtioned for doing their duty, namely for preaching the Goſpel; you will finde in the 29. ver. that St. Peter and the other Apoſtles anſwered and ſaid, We ought to obey God rather than men. And after that

when

when they were beaten, and commanded not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, what did the Apostles do, did they obey? no. They rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. And as you may see in the last verse of that Chapter, That daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.

Several other instances I might give you, but I proceed. In the next place, the next thing considerable is the eminency of Moses faith, in the 24, 25, 26. verses. By faith Moses when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaohs daughter; where by the way observe, that it is more honour to be a Christian, than to be a Courtier. It is more honourable to be the son of God by grace and adoption, than to be the son of the greatest Monarch or Emperour in the World. There is none so nobly descended in all the world as the people of God, they are of the Blood Royal of Heaven: others they may take their pedegree from Kings, and Monarchs,

narchs, and the great ones of the world; but the people of God are all deſcended from him who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the bleſſed and onely potentate, 1 Timothy 6. 15. yea the people of God are all of them Kings and Prieſts unto God, Revelations 1. 6.

Here likewiſe we might obſerve what low thoughts Chriſtians ought to have of every thing, be it never ſo honourable, in compariſon of Jeſus Chriſt. It had been an honour, yea an exceeding great honour, if we may account worldly greatneſs an honour, for Moſes to have been reputed the ſon of Pharaohs daughter, but how inconſiderable a thing was this in the eyes of Moſes, who was more nobly deſcended, being born of God, a choſen ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt, to go in and out before his people Iſrael: but I proceed.

Now the eminency of Moſes faith you may ſee in theſe following particulars: firſt, Moſes here ſees the various difficulties and dangers which were then like to fall upon him for his

faith.

faith. Will Moses forsake Pharaoh and embrace Jesus Christ, then Moses must suffer affliction: this Moses foresees, and this makes his faith more glorious. As the people of God are by faith assured of Christ, so likewise being once in Christ, they are sure to bear the Crosse of Christ: Christ and his Crosse are inseparable: All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, 2 Timothy 3. 11. See what our blessed Saviour saith in the Gospel of Saint Luke, If any man will come after me, that is, if any man will be a good Christian, let him deny himself, and take up his Crosse daily, and follow me, Luke 9. 23. He that will follow Christ must bear the Crosse as the blessed Apostles did, they rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. And truly the people of God may well rejoyce in their sufferings; for why, Christ hath born the brunt of all, he hath made our burthen light: although Christ by his sufferings hath not freed the people of God from sufferings, yet he hath made their sufferings to become easie.

Just

Juſt as it is with a man carrying a great tree on his back, and you may ſee little children to bear up the ſmall twigs of the tree; alas, there is no weight in them, the weight of all the whole burthen lies on the mans ſhoulders: ſo, beloved, it is with Chriſtians, Chriſt carries the load, the weight of all their afflictions, they do but bear up the little end, the ſmall twigs of it; therefore the Apoſtle excellently calls his afflictions light: Our light affliction, ſaith he, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Secondly, the eminency of Moſes faith appears alſo in this, namely, the great willingneſs and forwardneſs of Moſes, in that it is ſaid, He choſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people; which intimates unto us, the readineſs of Moſes to become the ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt. Certainly this was a very great act of faith in Moſes, a carnal eye would rather have choſen to have bin the ſon of Pharaohs Daughter, an eye of ſenſe which ſees

no

no better, would rather have chosen greatnes and eminency in the world, then the meannes and poverty of Gods people: rather to have bẽn Pharaohs Grandchilde, and honourable at Court, then to have bẽn the poor afflicted sons of God. Carnal men, men whose God is their wealth, and whose hearts are set upon their riches, would rather chuse to be rich with Dives, than to be poor with Lazarus; but a gracious Soul had rather want bread with Lazarus, than to want grace with Dives. It is not all the riches in the world that can content and satisfie the soul of a Saint; a few will see it better for him, if God sees it good for him to beg his bread with poor Lazarus on earth, than to beg his water with rich Dives in hell.

A godly man by faith sées that glory which is to come. they know that when this earthly tabernacle of theirs shall be dissolved, that they have a building with God in heaven, an inheritance which is uncorruptible and undefiled, which passeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who do believe: but a wic-

wicked man he sees onely by an eye of sense, he sees no farther than his riches; he thinks if he may be great and honourable here in the world, he esteems this the onely happiness, and he thinks nothing better than to be rich; and indeed he may well think so, for he knows of no better condition. The world with the honours and pleasures of it are even a heaven to the men of this world; I, and indeed it is all the heaven they shall have. Son, remember (saith Abraham to Dives in the 16. of St. Luke) that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things. Dives would very fain have enjoyed heaven after his death, and yet he would live upon earth in such a sumptuous delicious manner, as if this world had been his onely heaven: And true it is; the portion of a wicked man is in this life. God gives wicked men their portion in this life, but he reserves a portion for his Saints in the life to come. Wicked men are very like to some prodigal spendthrifts, who spend all their portion before they come to years; but the portion of

Gods people is reserved for them till they come to age. God sees it good, yea best for his Children to have their portions reserved for them till they come to years, and that is till they come to heaven. He gives his people as much of the world as may serve to bear their charges to heaven; but their full portion he reserves for them till they come to heaven: and truly the portion of a Child of God is very great.

God is the portion of his people, and believe it God will never see his people want so long as he hath it; and Gods treasure is inexhaustible, it can never be drawn dry: All things are yours (saith Saint Paul, 1 Cor. 3. 21.) speaking to the believing Corinthians) whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christs, and Christ as Gods.

Having thus briefly run over the words, I come now to give the practical Observations which flow from hence for our edification:

And

And firſt of all, I obſerve from hence the tranſcendent excellency of ſaving faith, by faith Moſes did thus and thus.

Secondly, I note from hence, that the condition of Gods Children in this life, is an afflicted condition.

Thirdly, I obſerve likewiſe from hence, that the people of God ſhould rather ſuffer any affliction, than commit the leaſt ſin; it is better to ſuffer than ſin.

And then fourthly, I obſerve hence, the great vanity of ſinful pleaſures, they are but for a ſeaſon.

Fifthly, I obſerve, that the reproaches of Chriſt are better, yea, as the Text ſweetly expreſſes it; are greater riches than all the honours of the world.

And then laſtly, I obſerve from hence, that God hath a recompence of reward for his people, he will make them amends for all their loſſes at the laſt: he that loſeth any thing for Chriſt, ſhall be no loſer by the bargain: Every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands.

for my Name sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life, Mat. 19. 29.

Before I proceed to Application, I shall a little open and confirm these several truths by way of Doctrinal Explication: And to begin with the first, viz. That faith is a most transcendent, excellent, and saving grace; and this you may see all along this whole Chapter. First, it brings the people of God into a good report. By faith our services become acceptable in the sight of God. And without faith it is impossible to please God; For whatsoever is not of faith is sin. By faith, Noah being warned of God prepared the Ark, to the saving of his house, and thereby became an heir of righteousness. By faith Abraham forsook his Country, for by faith he saw the heavenly City which God had prepared for him. And all along the whole Chapter you may see the excellency of faith in the several effects of it in the faithful Saints and servants of God, who of all others, best deserve the name of Worthies: Who through

through faith ſubdued Kingdomes, wrought righteouſneſſe, obtained promiſes, ſtopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, eſcaped the edge of the Sword. And others had trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings; yea, moreover, bonds and impriſonments. They were ſtoned, ſawn aſunder, were tempted, ſlain with the ſword: They wandred about in ſheepskins and goatskins being deſtitute, afflicted, and tormented. Theſe all obtained a good report through faith, By faith the ſick are healed, Luke 7. 50. By faith the people of God are purified, juſtified; and by faith they are ſaved, Rom. 5. 1. Epheſ. 2. 8. By faith we have acceſs to God by prayer, Rom. 5. 2. By faith we believe the word of God, and they that by faith do believe in God, ſhall at the laſt receive the end of their faith, even the ſalvation of their precious ſouls, 1 Pet. 1. 9.

In the next place to come to the ſecond point, which is this, That the condition of Gods children in this life is an afflicted condition: God had but one Son without ſin, but God hath

never a son without affliction. Our blessed Saviour himself was not free from afflictions; nay, he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; he was oppressed, and he was afflicted, Isa. 53. 3, 7. The Prophets they were afflicted and imprisoned, and slain. Likewise the Apostles and Primitive Christians, as you may see at large in this Chapter where my Text is, Heb. 11. They were stoned, sawn asunder, cruelly scourged and imprisoned: yea, as the Psalmist saith, Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all, Psal. 34. 19. Our Saviour tells his Disciples what they must look for in the world at his departure from them: If the world hate you (saith our Saviour, John 17. 18, 19) ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, that I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servants is not greater than their Lord:

Lord: if they have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you; and all theſe things will they do unto you for my names ſake. Yea, ſaith the holy Apoſtle St. Paul, reckoning up his manifold perſecutions in 2 Tim. 3. 12. All that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus muſt ſuffer perſecutions. Many more Scriptures I might give you for the confirmation of this excellent truth, but theſe I hope may ſuffice, this being a truth which the people of God in all ages have born teſtimony unto with their blood. Nay, this truth is ſo clear, that it even may be read by the light of theſe fires in which the Saints of God ſuffered death, thoſe glorious fires which ever burneth freſh in the memory of Gods people, even thoſe fiery chariots which carried our heavenly Elijahs, our bleſſed Martyrs to heaven.

In the third place, the third Obſervation to be conſidered is this; That the people of God ſhould rather ſuffer any affliction than ſin. This you may ſee in Joſeph, who rather than he would commit folly with his Miſtris,

rather then sin against God, he would run the hazard of all afflictions. How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God, Gen. 39. 9. And this truth is most eminently confirmed by holy Job, who rather than he would curse God and dye, would willingly with patience undergo all his afflictions. Job underwent all afflictions, and it is said of him, In all this Job sinned not. Let God afflict saith Job, I will suffer with patience; it is the Lord, let him do what he pleases, my afflictions shall never move me to forsake my God. Though God afflict me all the dayes of my life, yet will I wait with patience till my change come. And in the thirteenth Chapter he resolves though God should kill him, yet he would trust in him. So likewise we finde an eminent example for this in holy Daniel, as you may read, Dan. 6. 14, 15, 16. Daniel rather than he would sin against God in ceasing to call upon God by prayer, would suffer himself to be cast into the Lions den. So likewise the three children in the third Chapter of Daniel, rather than

they

they would sin against God, by worshipping of Nebuchadnezzars golden Image, would undergo the furious flames of his burning fiery furnace. So the blessed Apostles, as you heard before, rathen than they would obey the wicked commands of men, in not preaching the Gospel, willingly rejoyced in suffering affliction for so doing. Many more examples I might give you, but these I hope may suffice: and if there had been no other example than what is set down in the words of the Text, this heavenly truth had been sufficiently confirmed.

In the fourth place, I come to prove the vanity of all sinful pleasures, and that may appear, first from the shortnels of them; and secondly from the bitternesse of their end. They are but for a season, they come to an end; nay, they shall end in endless woe and misery. Though sin be sweet for the present, yet its bitter, yea, bitternesse it self in the latter end. Though sin may be pleasant for a season, yet remember, I beseech you, it will be painful to eternity. The pleasures of

sin

sin they have an end, but the pains and torments which sin procures, they have no end. When sinners have undergone the wrath of God ten thousand times ten thousand millions of years, yet then are their torments as far off from having an end, as they were at first. The torments for sin are eternal, and I beseech you remember eternity hath no end: what pleasure then can there be in that which brings eternal pains with it? Sinners even when they delight themselves in their sins, even then are they pulling destruction upon themselves, even eternal destruction. Every step in sin how sweet, how delightful soever it be in the eyes of the sinner, is a step to misery, eternal misery. They that hasten to sin, hasten to sorrow; yea, they run to hell. As Solomon saith, They love death; he doth not mean that sinners love death, as death; there is no beauty, or amiableness at all in death simply considered in it self; but yet they may be truly said to love death who love sin, and delight in sin, and live in sin. The wages of

sin

sin ye know is death, Rom. 6. 23. Delight in sin is a hasting into the armes of death. Sinners by their delight in sin do as it were woe death, and invite death and the grave, even hell and destruction: so that even sinners themselves, though now for a while Satan blindes their eyes, yet at last when it is to to late they shall be forced to confess and say, that there is neither pleasure nor profit in sin. The Devil makes the sinner believe that there is a great deal of pleasure and profit in sin; you shall get by it, saith the Devil: but let sinners once truly cast up their accounts, how that eternal damnation will be their wages, and then let them see what they have gotten by sin. It is possible I confess, that some may say they have gotten hundreds and thousands by it; they have gotten Houses, and Lands, Honour and Esteem among men, pleasure and profit in the world; but what a miserable gain is that which is gotten with the loss of the soul.

Read that dreadful Scripture in

Mt.

St. Matthews Gospel, Mat. 16. 26. and then see if there be any thing gotten by sin: What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Will thy Riches which thou hast gotten by sin, by oppressing the poor, and defrauding thy neighbour, redeem thy soul from death, surely no. Thou mayest delight thy self in enlarging thy barns, as that rich Fool did: But thou Fool, this night shall thy Soul be required of thee, then whose shall they be. There is no loss like the loss of the soul. There is nothing to be gotten by sin; thou mayest lose thy soul by sin, and lose heaven by thy sin, and lose the love and favour of God by sin. Sin may pretend pleasure and profit, but surely it brings ruine and destruction,

Those rich men which Saint James speaks of, James 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Verses, they thought that gain which they got by defrauding their labourers of their wages to be very sweet: they lived in pleasures, they inriched themselves by the sweat of other mens labours: but what have they any

cause

cauſe to reioyce in this? No, ſaith the Apoſtle, Go too now ye rich men, weep and howl, for your miſery which ſhall come upon you. They thought to heap up riches by their injuſtice and cruelty, but they heaped up onely a little fuel for the eternal fire. Dives he thought himſelf altogether happy when he enjoyed the world at will, when he fared deliciouſly every day; but what did this profit Dives? death robs him of all, and he himſelf is taken away from his ſinful pleaſures, and thrown headlong into eternal torments: he would enjoy the pleaſure of ſin while he lived, and now he muſt undergo the torments of ſin for ever.

O conſider this you that delight in ſin; canſt thou endure to dwell for ever in the everlaſting burning: if thou canſt endure the wrath of God for ever, if thou art able to ſtand before the Lord in the day of his fierce anger, then take pleaſure in ſin: if thou canſt prevent God from bringing thee to judgement, then let thy heart reioyce in ſin: but if after all thou muſt

must come to judgement, then take heed of sin. Do not conceit that sin to be pleasant whose pains will be eternal: in vain do men flatter themselves that they may sin and not suffer; did ever any man rebel and enjoy peace; can any offend God and have his blessing, surely no: sin shall not go unpunished; if men will sin they shall suffer. The soul that sinneth shall dye. Sin destroyed the Angels, those holy Spirits, sin made them unholy devils. Sin cast Adam out of Paradice. Sin destroyed the old World. Sin consumed Sodome and Gomorrah. Sin brings Wars, Plagues, Famine, & Destruction upon Nations. Sin ruins our names, tears our Consciences: and in a word, it destroys body and soul for ever.

And then fifthly, I observed, That the reproaches of Christ are greater riches than all the honours of the world. The best of Gods Saints have been reproached, as holy Job, and David was not onely reproached, but was a reproach both to his enemies and to his neighbours: He was

made

made the song of the Drunkards. The Apostles they were also reproached, but here is that which sweetens all, Christ hath born the brunt of all: Christ accounts all our reproaches to be his. The greatest part of Christs suffering for us was to bear our reproach: so the greatest part of our sufferings is to bear the reproach of Christ. Hence the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, exhorts us to go forth unto him, bearing his reproach, Heb. 13. 13. And indeed reproach in it self is so great a burthen, that were it not for this that Christ accounts it his, we should never be able to bear it. Hence Moses looked on his reproach as the reproach of Christ; and believe me, though there may be a great deal of weight in the reproaches of Christ, to press us down, yet there is abundance of worth in them to inrich us: though they may be as thorns here, yet they shall be as a crown of glory to us hereafter.

See what our Saviour saith in Matth. 5. 11, 12. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs

theirs is the kingdome of heaven. Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſhall ſay all manner of evil againſt you falſly for my ſake, rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Chriſt doth not ſay, if ye be rich and honourable in the world you ſhall be bleſſed: but Chriſt ſaith, if thou art reproached thou ſhalt be bleſſed. Thou mayeſt be rich and honourable in the world, and yet be everlaſtingly miſerable: but if thou art reproached for Chriſt, thou ſhalt be rewarded with Chriſt, If we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

Sirthly, and laſtly, I obſerve from hence, That God hath a recompence of reward for his people. If we ſuffer for Chriſt, we ſhall alſo reign with Chriſt: If we be reproached with Chriſt here, we ſhall be rewarded with Chriſt hereafter. See what our bleſſed Saviour ſaith, Matth. 19. 29. Every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children,

dren, or friends, for my ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit eternal life.

I might be longer on this point but I proceed to the Uſes which ſhall flow from hence for our edification. And the firſt Uſe is this, Is it ſo then, that Faith is ſuch an excellent grace, then let me exhort you all, in the name of Chriſt, to believe, to get Faith. Beloved, Faith is not onely excellent in it ſelf, but it will alſo make you excellent: The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, Prov. 15. 26. Believers were the onely excellent perſons in whom David delighted, Pſalm. 16. 3. Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, Heb. 11. 6. For whatſoever is not of faith is ſin, and God cannot be pleaſed with ſin. In a word, if ever you would be ſaved, get faith, for without faith there is no ſalvation: it is unbelief which is the ſoul-damning ſin. He that believeth ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned. The Sentence of damnation is already paſt againſt all unbeli-

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bers. He that believeth not is condemned already, John 3. 18. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, John 3. 36. For the Lords sake sinners believe, if you have any regard to your own good believe; if you have any love or pitty to your precious souls believe; if you would not be eternally miserable, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be eternally blessed.

Secondly, Is it so that the condition of Gods Children in this life is an afflicted condition, what then shall the condition of wicked men be in the life to come? If judgement thus begin at the house of God, what then shall be the end of sinners? If the righteous be thus scarcely saved, where then shall the sinner and ungodly appear? If God be thus severe to his Children, how terrible will he then be to his enemies: If through so many tribulations the people of God enter into heaven, then into

what

what woeful miſeries doe ſinners plunge themſelves into for a few ſinful pleaſures; for a few ſeeming ſinful pleaſures they heap to themſelves eternal torments. O conſider this you that forget God. In this life the people of God are afflicted, but in the life to come they ſhall be rewarded. Lazarus he was afflicted with hunger and ſores, yea ſcorned and contemned by Dives; but in the life to come Lazarus is rewarded, but Dives is tormented. The time will come when Gods people ſhall have pleaſures, everlaſting pleaſures, when the wicked ſhall be turned into hell, and all the Nations that forget God, Pſalm 9. 17. The Lord tryeth the righteous, (ſaith David) but the wicked and him that loveth violence his ſoul hateth. Upon the wicked he ſhall rain ſnares, fire and brimſtone, and an horrible tempeſt, this ſhall be the portion of their cup, Pſalm 11. 6.

Thirdly, Is it better to ſuffer than to ſin, then this may informe us of the great evil of apoſtacy; they that will turn from the truth rather than

suffer for the truth, such I say never did imbrace the truth in the love of it; they went out from us, but they were not of us. Many will own Christ and the word of Christ when they may do it without fear, but when trouble and persecutions come, then they fall away. But whosoever they are that in this case go about to save their lives shall lose them: they that deny Christ for fear of persecution, Christ will deny him before his Father. Apostacy was the sin of the Devil, and they that apostatize from Christ for fear of persecution, shall have the Devils reward. Thou wilt not suffer for Christ, but Christ will make thee suffer eternally. Thou thinkest life is sweet, and indeed so it is, but remember eternal life is much more sweeter, and the soul is more precious than life. Christ laid down his life to save souls, therefore Christians should lay down ten thousand lives, if it were possible to have so many, rather than lose their souls. By apostacy from the truth thou mayest

eſt ſave thy life, but in ſo doing thou loſeſt thy ſoul, which is of more value than ten thouſand lives. Did Chriſt lay down his life for us, and ſhall not we much more lay down our lives for him. Did Chriſt who is the prince of life become obedient unto death, even the death of the Croſſe for us, then let nothing ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt.

Chriſtians ſhould ſhew themſelves to be the ſervants of Chriſt by afflictions, perſecutions; be the way what it will, fair or foul, thick or thin, Chriſtians ſhould perſevere. The Apoſtles loved not their lives unto the death in the cauſe of Chriſt: and he that is afraid of his life in the cauſe of Chriſt, is ſurely afraid of heaven. If he that endures to the end ſhall be ſaved, then certainly he that falls away ſhall be damned. If we fear them who can onely kill the body, more than God who is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell, what will become of us. In a word, let me encourage you all in the words of the holy Ghoſt, as you may finde

it, Revel. 3. 10. what saith God there, Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer, behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tryed, and ye shall have tribulation ten dayes: But be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Fourthly, Is it so, that all sinful pleasures are short and vain, are they but for a season, then I note from hence by way of use, the great folly of sinners in neglecting eternal life for a few momentary pleasures. Sinners spend their time in gathering pebbles, and yet they trample upon pearls: How many grievous sinners are there, who with that wretched Cardinal are ready to say, they will not lose their parts in Paris, for their parts in Paradice. Sinners had rather lose heaven than part with their sins; as if they could enjoy the pleasure of sin for ever, never considering how soon death may come upon them, and turn all their pleasures into pains. Sinners are apt to flatter themselves in their own

folly,

folly, and to fancy that they ſhall live for ever, or at leaſtwiſe that they may enjoy their pleaſures till death come, and yet go to heaven: it is true, God ſuffers many to go on in their ſins, and never awakes their ſouls at all; but this he doth in judgement. Sinners deſpiſe Chriſt now, but Chriſt will hereafter deſpiſe ſinners: They who ſay unto God depart now, we will have none of the fear of the Lord, God will ſay unto them depart ye curſed hereafter. When death comes, ſinners muſt bid farewel to all their pleaſures; they rejoyce in their worldly pleaſures here, but when death comes, farewell pleaſures: not one laughter more, then never another jovial meeting, then no more ranting and ſinging, then all pleaſures will be turned into pains.

Conſider, I beſeech you ſinners, will your pleaſures profit you in the day of wrath, ſurely no; they may torment you as they did Dives. How many are there now in hell, who had as much pleaſure as thou canſt have,

who had as many merry meetings, as much drinking, and sporting, and other sinful pastimes as thou hast had: Oh, but what pleasure is it now to them to think of those things for which they are now tormented? The Lord awaken every secure sinner: for the Lords sake be not such fools as to damn your souls for such trifles as these are, which are not only vanity, but vexation of spirit also, even horrour and dread to all eternity.

Fifthly, Is it so, that the reproaches of Christ are greater riches than all the honours in the world, then I observe from hence, that a Crown of life is more worth than all the Crowns and Kingdomes in the world. Moses he looked upon Pharaohs crown, and he sees that to be fading and tottering; but Moses he looks upon the crown of life, and sees that to be everlasting. Kings by the permission of God, for the sins of a Nation, may be deprived of their earthly Crowns, as by sad experience we have found in this Kingdome; but the Crown of life which God shall give his

his people is beyond the reach either of men or devils to deprive them of: God shall give it them, and none shall be able to take it from them. There shall be no Usurpers in heaven to rob Gods people of their Crowns: there shall be no petitioning nor remonstrating against the Saints in heaven: the Devil who is now their accuser shall then be thrown down into the bottomlesse pit. The Saints Crowns shall not be voted uselesse and dangerous in heaven. God may for our sins suffer high Courts of Injustice here to take away the lives of Kings, but it is beyond the power and policy, either of them or devils, to take away eternal life from the people of God. Hereafter they are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. Men may take away the life of a Saint, but this now takes not away their Crown. Your joy no man taketh from you, saith our Saviour, John 16. 22. Men cannot deprive the people of God of their joy here, and certainly therefore neither men nor devils

devils can take away their eternal joy, which shall be without sorrow, and without ceasing, even for ever to all eternity.

Thirdly, Is it so, that the reproaches of Christ are such great riches yea, greater riches than all the honors of the world; how great then are the rewards of Christ? If Christ crucified be so lovely, how unspeakable lovely then is Christ in Glory? If the Saints be so glorious here under reproaches, how glorious than shall they be in heaven, when Christ himself shall put his glory unto them. If the people of God are so glorious here, what shall they be when they come to their kingdom, where they shall be clothed with the glorious white robes of Christ? For when Christ who is our life shall appear, (saith the Apostle) we shall also appear with him in glory. At the day of judgement, O how glorious shall the people of God then appear; they shall have Crowns upon their heads, yea, they shall be clothed with glory, and honour, immortality, and life eternal for ever, Rom. 2. 7.

Seventhly, Is it so then that God hath a recompence of reward for his people hereafter, then let me exhort you all to make choice of the Lord for your God: they that make choice of the Lord for their God here, shall be sure to have him for their reward hereafter. It was a good resolution that of Joshua, as you may read, Joshua 24. 15. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Let the men of the world run after Idols, and inventions of their own fancies, a child of God, a Joshua, he will worship God in spirit and in truth. And if ever we would be rewarded with Christ, then let us chuse Christ, and the wayes of Christ. Labour to grow in grace, and to abound in holiness, for godliness is the way to glory. Godliness (saith the Apostle) is great gain. Godlinesse hath the promise, not onely of this life, but of the life to come. Were the wades of God never so hard and difficult, yet they have a glorious reward: Godlinesse brings the best gain, eternal life and glory. Wouldst thou in the day of Judgement chuse heaven rather than hell,

hell, then chuse God and walk in his ways; imbrace holiness although it be never so much despised by prophane sinners, if ever thou wouldst be imbraced by Christ in heaven.

Eightly, is it so, that there is such a glorious reward for the people of God, then let us live and dye as becomes the heirs of Glory: Let us then walk worthy of God (as the Apostle saith, 1 Thes. 2. 12.) that hath called us to his Kingdom and glory. Is it so that the Saints of God shall shine as the stars in heaven, then let the people of God labour to shine as lights in the world: If thy inheritance be in heaven, then let thy conversation be in heaven: if your reward, your treasure be there, then let your hearts be there also. Is thy name written in heaven, let the world see it then in the legible Character of Holinesse. Think of that Crown of Glory which thou shalt everlastingly enjoy in heaven, and then so live that thou mayest be in a readinesse to receive it. Get oyl in your lamps, grace in your soyls, that when Christ who is your life

shall

ſhall appear, ye alſo may appear with him in glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the ſalvation of your ſouls.

Laſtly, is there ſuch a reward for the people of God hereafter, than be content with what God gives thee in this life: be thy portion what it will, if heaven be thine, thou haſt that which is better than all the world; they that have Chriſt for their portion have no want. The Lord is my portion (ſaith David, Pſalm 23. 1.) therefore I ſhall not want. Saint Paul accounted all things but droſs and dung in compariſon of Chriſt. Remember, it is better to be poor and godly, than rich and miſerable: Riches never made one ſoul happy, they have made many a ſoul miſerable. Let the people of God then take off their affections from the world: it becomes not the heirs of glory to look after ſuch trifles, it is enough for Swine to be rooting in the earth; Children who are fed at their fathers table will never regard the bones that are thrown to the dogs; they that are daily fed with

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with the fat things of grace and glory, ſhould never regard the vain and tranſitory things of the world. The glory of this world is but the portion of a reprobate; take them at the beſt they are but uncertain, here to day and gone to morrow; they may be deſtroyed by fire, they may be ſtoln away by thieves: thou mayeſt lay up treaſures here, and when thou haſt done all, they may be conſumed by ruſt and moths. Therefore take Saint Pauls counſel, and ſet your affections on things that are above, and not on things below: Let your converſation then be without covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as you have, for God hath ſaid, I will never leave you nor forſake you. Heb. 13. 5. So to conclude, I beſeech you fear the Lord all ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him.

FINIS.